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Bush: CIA is vital to defense

By JAMES MCCRORY

The Central Intelligence Agency is a national asset which must be preserved as a vital part of the American defense system, George Bush, director of the CIA, said here Tuesday.

Bush, 52, was the main speaker at the annual dinner meeting of the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce at the San Antonio Convention Center Banquet Hall.

The hall was packed for Bush's address.

Bush has announced he will be leaving his post on the day Jimmy Carter is inaugurated as President Jan. 20.

He told his audience the intelligence information and analysis provided the President and the policy makers by the intelligence community is indispensable in preparing the United States for any eventuality in international affairs.

"I think one of the greatest dangers to this country would be to allow an organization such as the CIA to be weakened by those who seek to discredit and destroy it," Bush stressed.

The daily job of collecting, distilling and producing first-rate

intelligence for the President does not make headlines, but it is essential if we are to be alert and have adequate warning of international trends and events."

Bush said one of his constant concerns over the past year has been the protection of intelligence sources and methods.

Protecting

"I am charged under the law with protecting our methods of operation," Bush explained. "To say that secrecy in foreign intelligence is inconsistent with democracy is to ignore the importance of defending our freedom against determined and unscrupulous adversaries."

"Our allies and friends abroad will not work with us if we are not serious about this," he said.

At the same time, Bush said, he recognizes the importance of accountability, of being fully responsible to presidential direction and to congressional oversight.

He said no director of the CIA today could possibly tolerate any abuse of the integrity of the foreign intelligence process.

Bush, who was appointed to his post in January 1976 by President Ford, briefed President-elect Carter in Plains, Ga., recently on intelligence matters.

The CIA director said he has been gratified by the professionalism he has found at the agency.

"It is important that the American people understand the intricate job the CIA is doing in an increasingly complex world," the director said.

Essential

"It is essential that we have the support of the American people."

Bush referred to such aspects as agency reporting and analysis on worldwide economic intelligence, the monitoring of the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks agreements and the threat of international terrorism.

Bush said the agency continues to attract quality applicants with advanced degrees, necessary for modern intelligence analysis and estimation.

"This is just one more indication that the young people of this country support the need for a good foreign intelligence product to help our

leaders reach the appropriate decisions," Bush said.

The director told the San Antonio Express he hasn't decided what he'll do once he leaves the agency in late January.

He did say he intended returning to Houston, his city of residence, by mid-1977. He explained he would tying up loose ends in Washington before returning to Houston.

Congressman

Bush is a two-time congressman from Harris County and twice ran unsuccessfully for U.S. senator from Texas.

Prior to being appointed director of the CIA, Bush served as U.S. envoy to China, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and as Republican national chairman.

Bush said he doesn't know whether he will return to politics or to a business career.

He helped found the Zapata Petroleum Corp. in Texas in 1953, and when the firm split in 1954, he formed the Texas-based Zapata Offshore Co., specializing in offshore oil drilling.

It grew to be a multi-million dollar concern, with worldwide operations. He sold out his oil interests when he moved to Houston in 1959 and became active in politics.

He was the first Republican Houstonians sent to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Bush's return to San Antonio was like old home week as he visited with Republican friends dating back to his days as a senatorial candidate.

The director renewed acquaintances with Republican and Democratic friends alike at a reception in his honor in the Convention Center Mission Room prior to the banquet.

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